DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 380 901 EA 026 614

AUTHOR Hammiller, Ruth E.

TITLE The Principal's Perspective of the Possibilities and Constraints of Neighborhood-Based Interagency Collaboration.

PUB DATE Oct 94

NOTE 33p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the University Council for Educational Administration (Philadelphia, PA, October 28-30, 1994).

PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS *Administrator Role; *Agency Cooperation; Community Coordination; Community Programs; *Community Services; Cooperative Planning; *Educational Cooperation; Elementary Secondary Education; Integrated Services; Outreach Programs; *Principals; Program Implementation; *School Community Relationship; Social Services

ABSTRACT

Although the principal is a vital key in the success of any project involving the school, a variety of constraints interfere with the principal's effectiveness to use interagency collaboration as an impetus for school reform. This paper presents findings of a study that investigated the perspectives of principals toward a neighborhood-based interagency collaboration (CBIC) effort implemented in a large midwestern city from April 1992 to December 1993. A neighborhood interagency team had been formed in two neighborhoods to serve as a clearinghouse, provider, and coordinator of direct services, with a focus on prevention. Data were gathered from observation of all interagency team meetings, and interviews conducted with a total of 36 participants from 8 schools in the 2 neighborhoods--9 principals and project assistants, 3 district-level administrators, 17 interagency team members, 2 parent-school liaisons, and 5 top-level administrators. The principals identified major strengths of the program, its possible goals, limitations, and constraints. Recommendations for meshing CBIC with school reform include: (1) maintain a long-range focus; (2) allocate sufficient time and money for planning; (3) involve all schools in the neighborhood; (4) train school administrators and staff on collaboration; and (5) consider the neighborhood view of community life in choosing the type of interagency collaboration. (LMI)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

R. Hammiller

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

**DRAFT**

ED 380 901

# The Principal's Perspective of the Possibilities and Constraints of Neighborhood-based Interagency Collaboration

Ruth E. Hammiller, Ph.D.

Lake Mills Area Schools

Work: 135 E. Prospect Street

Lake Mills, WI 53551

414-648-2338

Home: 1444 Endl Blvd.

Fort Atkinson, WI 53538

414-563-7427

Paper presented at the University Council for Educational Administration Annual Conference, Philadelphia, PA, October 28-30, 1994

Running Head: Principal's Perspectives of Interagency Collaboration

**DRAFT**

EA 026 614

# THE PRINCIPAL'S PERSPECTIVE OF THE POSSIBILITIES AND CONSTRAINTS OF NEIGHBORHOOD-BASED INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

Increasingly, coordination of services is being seen as vital to the improvement of human service delivery to children and families. However, school-linked services are still experimental and little research has been conducted. Historically, most services have been school-based (Future of Children, 1992). These school-based programs to date (a) have little resident involvement, ( b) are still case management based, (c) are targeted at coordinating line staff, and (d) are focused on dealing with families in a top-down fashion (i.e., picking certain families with whom to work) (Crowson & Boyd, 1993; Heath & McLaughlin, 1987; Schorr, 1988). Evidence of interagency collaboration efforts based within the community rather than within the school is scant. Community-based/neighborhood-based interagency collaboration may allow agencies to more effectively involve residents and create a preventive, proactive manner of delivering services.

I have studied one neighborhood-based interagency collaboration effort in a large midwestern city from April of 1992 to December of 1993. A neighborhood interagency team was formed in the Walnut Grove (WG) and Kennedy Manor (KM) (pseudonyms) neighborhoods to serve as a clearinghouse, and provider and coordinator of direct services, with a focus on prevention. The neighborhoods were targeted because they had one of the highest concentrations of low-income people of color, and the highest crime rate in the city. Team members included a representative of the police department (neighborhood officer), school district (school social worker), human services (social worker), and public health (nurse). The teams began meeting in March, 1992 and began meeting weekly in the neighborhoods in October of 1992.

This paper is part of a larger study about the progress and outcomes of this collaborative effort. Originally, I wished to explore the role and perspectives of the principal in neighborhood-based interagency collaboration. I believe that the two are intertwined, as perspectives will influence what role a principal will assume. However, due to space constraints, the role of the principal is the subject of another paper. First, I frame my study with the relevant literature.

Principals historically have not been trained in collaborative leadership and shared decision making with other community agencies. Jehl and Kirst (1992), however, believe that these skills are essential to establish school-linked services. The authors also advocate four other roles of the principal: (a) an active participant, (b) an advocate for an expanded school role, (c) a reorganizer who links key staff with other agency staff members, and (d) an enabler to promote staff involvement.

Some authors have studied the constraints principals have encountered while trying to promote outreach in the community. Leiter (1983) found that as a principal's role changed from that of an internal manager to that of a boundary spanner (i.e., reaching out to the community versus only conducting business within the school walls), teachers experienced costs in lack of coordination and leadership within the school. Although the boundary spanning role allowed the principal to increase effectiveness in the community, it also created a disruption of support and cooperation within the school that seemed to accompany increased community dissatisfaction; the principal was caught in a Catch-22.

Smylie, Crowson & Hare (1993, 1992) found similar double binds, or role conflicts, for principals in a school-based collaboration effort. The addition of service coordination and the associated increased personnel who operated within the schools

led to greater complexities and ambiguities in maintaining in-school cooperation for the principal. Principals were expected to respond to new projects while simultaneously trying to maintain stability through traditional means. Additionally, principals have guarded the school from outside interruptions, but service coordination and decentralization initiatives "attempt to open new doors and create greater community access to schools" (1993, p. 9). The authors found that principals responded to these challenges in three ways. According to Smylie, Crowson & Hare:

> First, principals, in varying degrees, compartmentalized and isolated the project from routine school functions. Second, they engaged in entrepreneurial behavior, treating the project as a reservoir of resources for their schools. Finally, principals evoked a wide range of control mechanisms to influence project implementation. Each of these responses aimed at satisficing, at striking an acceptable compromise among demands of the coordinated services project, the goals and demands of the school, and key stakeholder groups in the school community (1993, p. 10-11).

Valverde (1988) stresses the need for principals to create a "cultural climate that mirrors the communities" (p. 322). Principals do this by learning about the various cultures, increasing their teacher's knowledge and understanding the various cultures they serve, by coming in regular contact with diverse students, and by influencing students and teachers directly through controlling the physical environment. Valverde believes that creating a school climate that reflects the culture of the students is "central to holding minority students in school and to promoting learning" (p. 324).

Denton (1987) advocates for principals to become community leaders, and thus leave the traditional boundaries of the school building. Denton outlines a community leadership process that includes agenda setting, participation mobilization, resource integration, and collaborative management.

Bringing these ideas together, Zeldin (1990) discusses the need for the principal to establish the tone for collaboration, using modeling, incentives and evaluation of teachers to increase teachers' skills in working with parents. Principals need to provide staff time to carry out shared decision making with parents, and this may be necessary before teachers and parents can form sustained partnerships. School policy needs to then support the principal. Sarason (1982) also points to the fact that the principal is increasingly involved with services that are beyond their personal knowledge and expertise and, "because they [outside services] are not administratively under his or her jurisdiction, complicate problems with leadership, responsibility, and power " (p. 162).

In sum, although the principal is a vital key in the success of any project involving the school, a variety of constraints interfere with the principal's effectiveness to use interagency collaboration as an impetus for school reform. Examples of interagency collaboration efforts housed in the community versus the schools are missing in the literature. This study will add to the knowledge base about how principals view neighborhood-based interagency collaboration. Further, principals views are important to consider, as their perspectives will also shape the role that both the principals and the school will assume when involved with neighborhood-based interagency collaboration.

## Research Questions

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the perspectives of principals in neighborhood-based interagency collaboration. In this paper, I addressed these specific research questions:

1. What strengths and possibilities did principals perceive in regard to neighborhood-based interagency collaboration?
2. What limitations and constraints did principals perceive in regard to neighborhood-based interagency collaboration?

## Methodology

Qualitative methods guided the data collection. I focused on the eight schools that students from these two targeted neighborhoods attended. One principal ignored the request for an interview and has ignored the project. I interviewed nine principals and assistants associated with the project, 3 district level administrators, 17 interagency team members in the two neighborhoods (that included neighborhood residents), 2 parent-school liaisons, and 5 top-level administrators associated with the other three agencies involved, totaling 36 interviews. I began observations of all interagency team meetings in each neighborhood a month after the inception of the project. A total of 161 meetings, over 18 months, were observed, totaling 322 hours of observation data.

## Analysis

I used a combination of constant comparative and analytic inductive methods of data analysis. That is, I first identified preliminary research questions, then coded the field/observation notes of the meetings based on these questions. Through this analysis emerged additional questions, and a few of my initial questions receded in importance, based on this data. I then grouped coded responses according to their associated questions. I also noted emerging themes and coded the data accordingly. A similar procedure was then applied to the interviews. All but two of the interviews

were taped. All taped interviews were transcribed and detailed field notes were completed for each interview. I then used the constant comparative method within these groupings to determine relevant themes.

## Findings and Discussion

In the findings, I first consider the views held by school principals about the strengths and possibilities of neighborhood-based/community-based interagency collaboration. (CBIC is used as the acronym for the project in this paper). Second, I consider the principals' views involving the limitations and constraints when working with neighborhood-based interagency collaborative efforts. Finally, implications for school reform, drawn from the data, will be suggested.

### Strengths and Possibilities of Neighborhood-based Collaboration

#### Strengths

The principals identified six major strengths of neighborhood-based interagency coordination. The strengths were (a) the high quality of the people on the teams, (b) the communication and access to services were increased, (c) the problems were so large that they required the help of all the agencies, (d) the project advocated the taking of risks, (e) the belief of some principals that the project had a positive effect on families, and (f) the preference voiced by most principals for a neighborhood-based versus a school-based effort for this particular situation.

High quality people. Principals made reference to the high quality people who composed the teams. For example, one principal noted:

> Some of the people that I know that are part of the team are exceptional in their commitment and skills...like any project, it is the people that are going

> to make the difference and I think they have chosen well and we have all chosen well in terms of our schools who we get involved.

Principals were responsible for selecting which of their school personnel would participate on the teams and principals were proud of their choices.

Increased communication and access. Increased communication, trust and access to resources were listed by several principals. Communication and trust between agency members and between agencies and the community were both discussed. Regarding the agencies themselves, principals stated:

> I think initially the strengths I would see is that it has provided a forum for staff members from the different agencies...to come together and meet and talk on a non-crisis level, on a proactive approach.

> You know, I think just the fact that people are sitting down and recognizing that be it talking about a process or, you know, delivering on those goals is really important.

Two principals discussed community connections that also involved a better delivery of resources:

> I think helping in the sense that there have been some things we have been able to pull off a lot more easily out there in the community than we were before because you know more who to go to. You are not trying to go to all of these different people wondering who's doing what.

> I think that members of the team are being seen by the members of the community over here as a viable committee and that is the key thing in my mind that that is what's going to help have a long lasting effect....If the community didn't see them pulling together, the community saw something disjointed, everybody not working together, it wouldn't be very beneficial. But I think it's happening.

Problem required all agencies. Other principals believed that CBIC forced the recognition that problems were bigger than any one agency could handle. CBIC

focused people's attention on the fact that the delivery of human services was an agency-wide problem, not just one agency's problem. The following is an illustrative comment:

> I think in a more system sense it has provided an acknowledgment within the city, that this is a city-county-school district problem. It is not a problem belonging to any one of those areas so it is at least an acknowledgment that this doesn't belong to one area, that it shouldn't be solved by one area. It has started to help to eliminate some of the finger pointing in all directions. I mean not just at the district but the district, health, and human services and the police department, so certainly that's been something that's been positive.

Advocated risk-taking. Principals liked the fact that CBIC advocated taking risks or doing something differently. One principal noted:

> [The teams have] the commitment to trying to do something different and something that will go beyond next year for a change. So many of those type of projects have come and gone we are tired of them.

Another principal was proud of how the team tackled the assignment given them, and viewed the assignment itself as somewhat of a professional risk between agency members. She explained:

> Where sometimes we had to get through some real, I think, difficulties we're talking the same language almost but deciding who is going to do what and role identification, setting up a communication system between agencies that we're really not going to be kidding with each other as before...who did some of the same stuff and the same domain so they have to decide about turf, I think. And I don't think it ever developed into a bitter battle, but it certainly was a concern to be worked out.

Positive effect on families. Some principals believed that families had been positively affected, either about their feelings in regard to the school or in more personal ways. Principals did not have "hard data" to support their beliefs but were beginning to consider what data to gather. Beliefs were based predominantly on personal communication with parents or staff. One principal explained:

> Already, I can see our families getting a sense that we really are even more committed than they thought because we are out there and they know this is something we value and something that we are really committing ourselves to over the long haul. And I think that has already made a difference here.

One principal had a record of the number of families with whom the team had performed interventions, as the following quote indicates:

> This last year I think it was eleven families that live in this area were affected by a team intervention activity so the team working together did work with eleven families. So that's a positive.

One principal discussed how he had used the county social worker in the neighborhood in the following quote:

> I think that we are maybe starting to see a little bit of the trickle-down effect in the sense that we may be actually starting to get to the families....And starting to see some improvement in the delivery of services there [the neighborhood]. Case in point--over the last months the school has been saying for a long time to [social services] is it would be much easier for us to deal with a social worker in an area rather than a social worker being assigned to a family and a different worker to the family next door and a different worker to the family up on the second floor so that we are not dealing with ten or twelve different workers. We finally got that in May where now there is one social worker assigned to [KM or WG] and we've already utilized him in a couple of ways at the end of school.

Preference for neighborhood-based versus school-based. Finally, principals preferred a neighborhood-based effort versus a school-based effort for four reasons. First, the principals, using almost identical language, believed that CBIC promoted shared responsibility. As one principal explained:

> I guess my philosophy is that schools can't do everything. That's been the biggest downfall of education--where we've taken away everything from the church, the family and the neighborhood. Now, we're trying to give it back, but it's hard to give it back. Because, what people have done is taken their money and focused on other areas and so there's no money. So, it seems to me that we need to get back to the neighborhood. We need to say to the neighborhood and the community that schools can't do everything. We can help and work together.

Related to this, principals believed that a neighborhood-based effort diverted public pressure from the school, and engaged the community in sharing problems and solutions for student achievement. One principal summed this well, saying:

> And I like taking the focus off of the school. I like that personally. Not because I want to escape responsibility but because I want the community to realize this is a community effort. It's not just a school effort.

Second, principals believed that CBIC, by addressing family issues, allowed the schools to carry out their central mission of education. Improved families should lead to improved students' performance. In other words, there was the recognition that the child is best educated by addressing the whole family. As one principal said:

> I don't feel as though we can pour [school] resources into situations that we're not ever going to be able to fix and we might better put the money and the effort into being better educators. So, I guess I see the whole role of CBIC and the school as being somewhat related, but that's not our mission--to be doing what CBIC is doing. .... The return on our investment in WG [pseudonym for one neighborhood] is not good, because the problems are way beyond what an individual social worker can do. That's why I think in that situation, the CBIC has a better chance of improving the overall quality of life in that community and that's what will then positively impact on the schools.

Third, the principals considered the neighborhood-based effort as a way to further their agenda to involve the parents and community in the school. That is, the principals were seeking ways to involve neighborhood parents in the school, and this effort contributed toward this goal. One principal spoke eloquently about one reason behind parents' lack of school involvement:

> I mean for a lot of our families school was never a comfortable place when they were there themselves... because we are an institution, you know, one that wasn't that pleasant of an experience for them. We have to try to reach out to them to try and help them feel more comfortable before they are ever going to be comfortable coming in here [school].

The principals believed that the neighborhood-based project engaged vocal neighborhood constituents, and served as a regular and timely release valve for frustration. That is, team meetings served as a symbolic arena (Bolman & Deal, 1984) by providing a forum for residents to voice their concerns, some of which were targeted to the school. Related to this, the meetings served as a forum for the school to showcase their efforts for the minority community. This reciprocal exchange resulted in increased resident confidence in school efforts (although little had changed in actual practice), and the principals possessed greater understanding about community needs and concerns. One principal described this public relations aspect of the project for the school:

> I feel like...the primary thing is that this provides a vehicle for schools to be visible in the neighborhood, that they aren't isolated in the school building and it helps to strengthen the connection between the students and what goes on at school and to know that they aren't two separate things..."

Additionally, one principal stated, "I'd like to think that it's increased...the image of a more positive image hopefully about this school."

Fourth, the need to obtain more immediate help with students stemmed from concerns about the drastic change in community demographics and the resultant increased needs of families. Techniques and methods that used to work no longer seemed to work. The necessity to try something different was strong. Several principals agreed that school-based efforts just did not seem successful, both in practical experience and in the literature. As stated by one principal:

> [the district] made a lot of effort and a lot of initiatives for school-based learning. But we have a change of community and what worked ten years ago simply is not working now and I think people realize that it was a square peg in a round hole and we needed to start looking at different ways to get at these problems and I think this, at least philosophically, is a different way of looking at them. You know, you read a lot about changing paradigms. Well,

> this is in fact a different paradigm. It is a different way to deliver services, it is a different way to provide education to kids, and I don't mean different in the sense of once they get here. It is acknowledging that there are issues that have to be dealt with before they get here."

Two principals also believed that neighborhood-based efforts had to be generated through school-based efforts, and viewed the development of neighborhood-based projects as a process that started with school-based collaboration as the impetus. One principal stated this idea nicely:

> I think community-based type of collaborations are the way to go and it seems to be substantiated in a lot of the literature I read on quality schools... but in reality its not going to ever happen. It's going to have to have some sort of a puberty stage again and that is through school-based collaboration. I would think in my mind that if you're doing a school-based type of situation, one of your goals is to get to a more community-based type of thing.

It should be noted here that this study did not attempt to compare the effectiveness of school-based to neighborhood-based efforts. For the particular city and school district under study, principals did believe they would prefer neighborhood-based efforts. However, this midwestern city had developed isolated neighborhoods within the city. The isolated neighborhoods were serviced by a variety of schools, often at considerable distances from the neighborhood. Neighborhood community centers were considered by residents to be the hub of their community activities. The community centers were where CBIC was housed. Perhaps in smaller, rural communities (where the school is often considered by the community as the hub of community life), school-based initiatives might be preferred by principals and other participants. It may be that the content and context of interagency efforts will determine what type of collaboration effort would be best.

Possibilities

Three themes emerged from the data about the goals that CBIC might attempt to address. The three goals/themes included improved coordination, the empowerment of families, and increased access to resources and communication.

Improve coordination. The first goal, identified by seven out of the nine principals, was to improve the coordination of services to families that the four agencies had in common. The focus was the elimination of duplication and fragmentation of services. According to one principal:

> We're working with so many different people within the area, CBIC is saying let's not everybody do the same thing with the same people. Let's get a team approach and work together.

Another principal voiced her frustration and the associated need to coordinate services:

> We have felt for a long time here, and especially in the last five years, that the problem is nobody knows what anybody else is doing and sometimes I think we all take ownership, maybe even more ownership than is necessary and find ourselves being real frustrated because we can't act on all the goals that we really have. But we feel like lots of times it is so difficult to communicate with the county because they are so strung out, you know, sometimes we have to leave a message on somebody's tape for, you know, three days before anybody can even get back to us on what we thought was a pretty crisis kind of situation.

Hence, principals were excited over the possibility of reducing fragmentation and duplication of services. One principal explained her frustration:

> If we're going to have county social workers assigned to kids, those social workers need to work with us and we need to work with them. But, you can't have two different entities doing the same thing. It's a waste of resources. That's what the problem has been. We have a social worker here, so if we have a kid whose battered, we've got to report it to the county that then it takes a whole day for our social worker to get hooked up here and hooked up there.... I understand we don't have enough social workers to do all that stuff, but the thing is that we have two people doing the same thing.

Empowerment. A second major theme involved increasing the empowerment of the families within the community. One principal spoke eloquently on the topic:

> I suspect the major goal, the ultimate goal is to help the neighborhood to help itself. To be more stable and, therefore, the people would be better able to function within that neighborhood and in general society.

Another principal additionally discussed the concept of developing citizen ownership within the neighborhood:

> I think the major goal of the project is to bring people together and give them some ownership in the community. I think the whole problem has been that a lot of those families don't know the resources that are available in [the city].

The proactive focus of the project was linked to the idea of empowerment by one principal:

> I think services are more accessible. I think interventive work on the part of the people that represent their agency is proactive and that's good. I think that it's [CBIC] built around the idea of self help and empowerment... putting it into practice cause you really become a member of the community, the students, the parents, the children in the neighborhood identify with who you are and what you do and how you can be helpful and yet you're really trying to build... self-sufficiency so that they can become in a position to solve their own problems.

One principal addressed specifically how to empower residents:

> Let's get them [residents] involved in that planning, phasing it in, making decisions about their own lives, and let's work on empowering them as best as we can. It's not something we'll do to them, it's something we'll do with them and provide support.

Principals disagreed on whether the teams should have pursued a case management format or if the teams should have abandoned case management in favor of a participatory, proactive, and preventive (empowerment) model. One principal who favored a case management model argued:

> I would've hoped they [the team] just would've picked some families right away and...targeted some families and said let's kind of learn as we go along here too....I'm getting itchy and I think that's the way several people involved with it feel too. Let's get going now.

However, another principal, who still did not have a staff member on the team, voiced a different belief:

> R: What we're trying to do is to literally within our programs model a concept of ownership. You build ownership to something. Now I could assign people to go to this thing and they could grieve me or they could say reluctantly OK or like that but there's no ownership there and I think we need to have indirect contact and nurturing type of contact built up where then people themselves are saying this I believe, and this I believe, and this we need to do, and this fits to our agendas and my agendas.
>
> Q: So once the ownership has been built and people really buy into the whole model and concept then you see it...
>
> R: Yes. Including kids...A student was very frank and candid. She says that we say kids are going to have a say in helping to design this school but we really haven't had a say....She's right. I didn't involve people in it. When a kid says something like that you are taken back. What they are asking is to be involved and maybe we've missed the boat on that. Its come to that point for that student and I think it comes to that point for us as a staff and community, too.

Another principal reinforced this "empowerment" perspective:

> I think the other thing that needs to happen is that people who participate in the project, and I'm talking about the people in those communities, they need to have some input. I think these kids need to have some input. I think these are the kinds of things that we normally do, is make those decisions thinking that we're helping somebody, but we don't ever ask the people that we're helping.

Access and Communication. The third theme/goal addressed the decentralization of services to provide immediate access to resources and better

communication between all parties, both agencies and residents. For example, one principal spoke about the need to link agendas with resources:

> In my opinion one [goal] is having a true, authentic link between the schools, the neighborhoods and the second thing would be to identify some common agendas and to seek the resources and I'm not talking strictly financial but more of human energy type resources together so that we are working for some common success.

Access to resources and support to provide for basic needs was advocated by another principal:

> Another goal has been to provide families with the support and the resources, help them be able to get what they need is really what it amounts to.

Summary

In sum, strengths cited by principals included (a) the high quality of the people on the teams, (b) the communication and access to services were increased, (c) the problems were so large that they required the help of all the agencies, (d) the project advocated the taking of risks, (e) the belief of some principals that the project had a positive effect on families, and (f) the preference voiced by most principals for a neighborhood-based versus a school-based effort for this particular situation. Principals preferred the collaborative effort housed in the neighborhoods versus the school because of four reasons. First, principals believed that CBIC promoted shared responsibility. Second, principals believed that CBIC, by addressing family issues, allowed the schools to carry out their central mission of education. Third, principals considered CBIC as a way to further their own agenda of involving the parents and community in the school. Finally, principals saw CBIC as a way of obtaining more immediate help for students. Because these neighborhoods existed in isolated pockets within the city and were serviced by a variety of schools not easily accessible

to the neighborhoods, the residents themselves viewed their community centers as the hub of community life. This study only points to the principals' preference in this situation. School-based efforts might be more popular in smaller communities where the school is already considered the focal point of community/neighborhood life.

Coordination and decentralization of services were viewed as creating the potential to empower individuals and families within each neighborhood. Further, the belief was revealed that decentralization and improved coordination of services would provide immediate access to resources and result in improved communication by all parties involved. By increasing the empowerment of community residents, the hope was that communities could become advocates for themselves. This might lead to community renewal, pride, and self-sufficiency. The belief was that if families were given the appropriate support and encouragement, the school's efforts would also become more effective (especially with children considered at-risk). Principals saw CBIC as possibly generating improved coordination of services, increased empowerment of residents, and increased access to resources and communication between all involved parties.

## Limitations and Constraints of Neighborhood-based Collaboration

### Limitations

Principals identified four weaknesses that limited the effectiveness of the project. Similar concerns were also shared by many of the other participants in the study. The five limitations included (a) the lack of role identification among team members, (b) the time-consuming nature of collaboration, (c) the lack of up-front

planning and resource allocation (especially the lack of time committed to the project), and (d) the lack of involvement of all the schools from the beginning.

Lack of role identification. The most often cited weakness was the lack of role identification among team members (i.e., who should participate and who should do what tasks). One principal argued:

> I think one thing is that they need to do more than talk.... but I don't see them actually doing anything.... It was very difficult for all those people to sort out and leave their "turf" or their kind of organizational ethic or whatever behind and form a new group that would work--and their loyalties would be to each other and to the people that they are serving. When I say loyalties, I'm thinking more about positive working relationships and things like that. I think there was a lot of gnashing of teeth and not getting very far in that whole thing and I think there wasn't a real clear idea of how they were going to function, but I'm not sure that the process was as important as the outcome and whoever was there, they just had to take as much time as it took.

Collaboration is time-consuming. A second concern shared by three principals was the length of time collaboration took, with much more talk than action. The frustration concerning the amount of time involved with collaboration without concrete results was voiced by this principal:

> Negatively, well I guess, this is just my own perspective, that maybe the stuff takes so long, you know; we talk and talk and talk and at times I feel like we are kicking a dead horse.... I mean from a realistic standpoint I know that has to take time, but from a realistic standpoint I'd like to see some way to cut through all of this.

Another principal just hoped that the amount of time needed to make collaboration work would not be too long. He feared that the project might be forced to end before it had a chance to succeed. He stated:

> So, when there is budget cuts people say here's another program that just ran out of money. Well, people don't take risks and don't get into the program. That's what I see--hoping it continues because I think it's picking up across the nation--these kinds of things where you bring in resources to the people.

Time commitment. Principals were concerned about the lack of up-front planning and resource allocation that resulted in a lack of information, and thus confusion abut how the project should be implemented. Out of all these concerns, time commitment stood out as the major issue. One principal complained:

> Well, a concern is time. Take a person such as [the school social worker] from our school. We need him desperately full-time no matter how much value we place on that program there is the urgency in the crisis kind of dimension we are always dealing with here and so to take him out of the building that much time without anybody else to do that, I'm not sure exactly how....And then who is actually going to supply the support? We have somebody else that we need to have come in here and spend part of the time when [the school social worker] is gone and over in the neighborhood. Then is the school board going to foot that or are they going to expect us to take it out of our own allocation, which at this point we can't afford?

The concern about time was echoed by another principal, and illustrated the double bind placed on the principal's staff. He explained:

> Difficulties in terms of time. We always know how much money we've got and we know when we're out of money, there's nothing left. But we seem to act like there's no limit on time and for example, our social worker's very active in this. And I say [to her] how much time are you spending on it? She said I'm spending probably two hours a week and she said if I really was going to make a contribution, I should be spending four hours a week. But she's only here at this school, you know, half-time. And she can't spend four hours a week and I can't seem to get more social work time for this school. But it is, it's one of those things that's time intensive and sometimes we go into things like this not realizing how much time it's going to take.

Another principal had a similar concern:

> To get them over there so that they are not so strung out in a hundred directions, I think everybody that is working and that's involved has got how many other things going and nobody back on the home-front to take care of whatever their obligations and roles entail.

The frustration of the time it took to wade through the political process was interwoven with this comment from one principal:

> I guess I could say that the only part of it that was frustrating at the beginning were the many meetings that we went to where there was just a lot of posture. And announcements in the newspaper by either county people or city people that this is what we are doing to solve this problem.... We live in a very political world and we're getting the money through the political process and people and everybody's got a little different stake in the action, however that may be, I do think that when people talk they are focusing on the needs of the community and that they're going to work to do the job. So it's not a big frustration. It's just that we got off to a very, very slow start.

Eventually, after over a year into the project, the school board did respond to the issue of the social work time. One additional full-time person was hired to spend half of their time allocation in each neighborhood to serve on the teams.

All schools involved. Some principals would have involved all the schools from the beginning, as the exclusion of some school personnel and principals seemed to have generated some hard feelings. One noted:

> I would not have had the sole school representative be [one school social worker]. I think the idea was that he was going to be a conduit of information and help people get started and that sort of thing. And, I'm sure there was a reason for doing that and obviously cutting down on the number of people who are involved, but I think it might have been more helpful from our point of view if there had been either more contact between [the designated social worker] and the folks at school while someone from the school had been at these meetings for the community training forces (staff) to see us, to know us in that respect, I think that would have been helpful.

Constraints

Principals identified four major constraints that focused on issues of a more global nature than the limitations principals mentioned. Again, principals were not the only participants who identified these constraints, but the ones cited by principals reflected the school's role versus other agencies. The four constraints included (a) a

concern about the appropriate identification of outcomes, (b) a concern that the issues were too large for any one project to tackle, (c) a concern that the link between the schools and the teams were vague, and (d) a concern that the agencies involved could not make significant systemic change.

Outcomes. Some principals were concerned about the outcomes, and hence, the chance for the success of the project. One principal voiced this concern well, and believed that the project needed to stay focused on children and not get tied to other agencies' agendas. One said:

> I think the people that get involved in this have been around the block so many times we are very committed and at the same time very hesitant because we are concerned about whether or not the energy that's placed into it will have any chance for it to reach fruition for us to see some degrees of success. Along with it is that the people that get involved in this come from many different backgrounds and interests and we have a lot of dialogue to do to find those common agendas....When it gets down to a real major concern for me, is, will it stay focused upon kids and their families? Will we not get caught up in another adventure of another persons' [organizations?] agenda? I'm really fearful of that.

Issues too large. Principals also voiced a fear that the project was trying to deal with issues that were too large to tackle. One explained:

> I think that the job itself is a significant undertaking and that in itself poses problems that temper our expectations.

One principal linked the immensity of the issues the teams were addressing to the need to stay focused so that real, concrete solutions could be found. She stated:

> Our district, our city, and although we're not unique, I realize we attempt to take on a lot and we don't really reach closure on so much. We kind of get caught up in a pendulum swing. The big barrier or the biggest one that I see is our being able to stay focused and not to bite off way to much but to keep

> focused as to what is our common goal agenda and then we need to say OK, well, that's not the route we need to follow. This needs to be more specific to meeting the needs of kids and their families in our community.

One principal was highly skeptical of the potential for success of neighborhood-based programs. This principal was uncomfortable in tackling many issues, and believed that the school had one mission (education) and should stay with that mission. His view was totally different than any other:

> I think it depends on the community. You know, you can only do so much in my opinion. We have teacher conferences here and we provide buses, for instance, to transport people from the community to the school and very few people took advantage of that....What you have is a history of failure and it's very difficult to reach people who will not make themselves available to be reached. So, you have a people who are so involved in their lives and everyday issues of surviving that even if you go into the community you may or may not be successful because they are so busy just living their daily lives. I think that's a problem."

Link between school and teams vague. A third constraint involved confusion about what the link between the school and the teams should be. One principal argued:

> I think in terms of the school, I think there's a lot of confusion about what we could use from this group [the team]. I mean what we want in our own minds--what our contribution needs to be--how we fit into the whole thing. I'm not sure. I mean the school has to be part of this, because in that community, probably the best functioning organizations are the public schools. I'm not sure how we fit into all of that.

Questioned if systems could change. Finally, some principals were skeptical of any of the agencies' ability to really make systemic change. Principals discussed the need to release power to the community, but were leery that agencies would be able to discard their "fix-it" models of top-down, case management service delivery. One principal spoke about this issue well:

> I mean we've been on a fix-it model and if we just worked harder and tried more and had more money, then we could make those over into something that would fit and we're coming to the conclusion that you can't make someone over. We've had it proved to us time and time again, but we believe so strongly it didn't matter. It was just like if we did it better, we could manage this. I think now the shift is maybe we have to let go of the power and control and try to help the neighborhood establish some sense of power and out of that will come some control and out of that will come a personal feeling of wanting training, wanting education, wanting your kids in school, wanting a more stable life. And when an individual wants that, they generally make efforts to get it. I think that's part of it and I think the schools are also shifting from this place that says 'OK, you send your children here, we'll take them and we'll fix them, we'll sort of open their heads and pour things in and then send them back to you.' I think we're realizing that that might have worked in the 50's or 60's or 70's, but it really doesn't work now, and it probably didn't work so much then, but we weren't in crisis. We didn't have so many people who were in need of so much.

Future Constraints

Principals identified three issues that could be sources of future constraint on CBIC. The three issues were (a) the ability to provide adequate funding, (b) the ability to adequately evaluate the project, and (c) the ability of all of the agencies to coordinate their individual missions.

Lack of funding. Lack of funding was the most frequently mentioned future constraint. As one principal put it:

> Funding. I'm always afraid, I think everybody is, of soft money. You just don't know; is it going to be there? You get yourself really committed and get something going and is somebody going to cut your water off eventually?....So will that funding and support be real minimal or will it be enough to really make the kind of impact necessary?

Another principal believed that funding was an issue, but that schools (and other agencies) could not always wait for needed funding to try innovative efforts. He argued:

> My initial reaction would be to say that we needed some additional money up front or realization that you can't have somebody who's doing a hundred

> percent of their job and say, 'Do you mind doing a hundred and twenty?' However, if we waited for that to happen it probably would never get off the ground because... agencies... just don't have, ya know, that kind of money laying around given the circumstances that we are under. So on the one hand I would like to say it would have been nice if we had some way to not pile more work on an already overworked individual, but realistically if we waited for that to happen we probably would never have gotten it.

Project evaluation. Principals were concerned about the ability to adequately evaluate the project to prove that CBIC really worked. Principals believed a cost benefit analysis of the project would need to be done. A representative comment was the following:

> And it [evaluation] will probably be a cost benefit analysis. That this system is more efficient and effective as the old way.

Another principal broadened this interpretation to other agencies:

> Well, again, not only the schools but the reallocation as far as the social worker in [KM], for example, that was a decision made by county social services. So they would also have to see a cost benefit to this type of thing too, and of course, it would be incumbent upon us to communicate that back to social services if in fact we see some long-term benefits.

Relatedly, one element of evaluation might include a self-evaluation by team members on their effectiveness. Unless something concrete would be accomplished, some principals feared that the team would dismantle itself. The need to feel successful within the inner workings of the team itself was pointed out by one principal:

> I think another thing that we have to realize is that to really get going, this group and the people they work with have to accomplish something that's meaningful to that group. And, I think if they don't accomplish something that's meaningful and probably deal with something like child care and with jobs and other stability kinds of things, transportation, whatever those issues are, then I think it's all doomed. You have to be able to say 'We did this' and that energized you for another fight and it also makes you feel like you're all on the team.

Coordination of agencies' missions. Principals were concerned about the inability of all the agencies to coordinate or prioritize their different goals/mission [illegible] stated:

> Funding, different priorities within the various bureaucracies, in other words; we have a new superintendent now and whether or not she will view this as a priority or not we don't know at this point....the long-term commitment, will we stick to it, see it through?

Another principal addressed the issue of coordination more broadly, that is, between all the agencies:

> I think a real future roadblock is that the program might become person specific and when the person goes so goes the program. That has to be where we talk linkages with service organizations, the schools, the parent organizations, student councils, student congresses, and all the different agencies that are out there. Then it should be a common item for all of us and not just something that is kind of on a pendulum swing right now....Now, how do we do it?... What's holding it up? I feel it's a lack of priorities but again I think it's a lack of concerted effort and focus. It's a lack of a legitimate timeline.

Summary

In sum, principals identified four major limitations concerning the project. First, a lack of role identification among team members was mentioned frequently that often led to confusion about how the team should operate. Second, and relatedly, principals complained about the length of time involved in this collaborative effort. Third, principals were concerned about the lack of up-front planning, information sharing, and resource allocation. Principals were especially concerned about the time commitment expected of their staff, without the district concomitantly reducing their staff's school duties. Fourth, some principals believed that all of the schools that

serviced the two targeted neighborhoods should have been involved from the beginning.

project might be considered a failure. Second, principals were afraid that the issues CBIC was attempting to address might be too pervasive and complicated. Third, considerable confusion was mentioned concerning what type of link should be formed between the school and CBIC. Last, some principals were skeptical about the ability of agencies to really make significant systemic change.

Finally, principals cited three possibilities which might constrain the project in the future. First, a lack of funding was the most frequently mentioned response. Second, principals were concerned about the evaluation of the project. Third, principals were skeptical about the agencies' ability to coordinate or prioritize their goals and/or their mission.

## Conclusions

Principals identified five major strengths of CBIC. The strengths included (a) the high quality of the people on the teams, (b) the communication and access to services were increased, (c) the problems were so large that they required the help of all the agencies, (d) the project advocated the taking of risks, (e) the belief of some principals that the project had a positive effect on families, and (f) the preference voiced by most principals for a neighborhood-based versus a school-based effort for this particular situation. Possible goals of CBIC, according to principals, might include

the coordination of services, the empowerment of community residents, the increased access to resources, and increased communication between agencies and residents.

Limitations cited by principals involved (a) a lack of role identification among team members, (b) the length of time collaboration consumed, (c) a lack of up-front planning and resource allocation (especially time committed to the project), and (d) a lack of involvement of all the schools from the beginning. Constraints, which took on a more global/macro focus, included (a) a concern about the ability to adequately evaluate the project, (b) a concern about the immensity of the issues the teams were addressing, (c) a concern about the vague link between the school and CBIC, and (d) a concern about the ability of agencies to make real systemic change. Funding, future evaluation issues, and an inability for the agencies to coordinate or prioritize their goals/mission were cited by principals as possible future constraints.

Data analysis does suggest some implications for school reform. First, as has been mentioned in other literature on collaboration, participants need to be aware of the amount of time collaborative efforts consume, both in planning and implementation. Consistently, it seems that people who engage in collaborative efforts underestimate how much time and resources such a project demands. Related to this, collaborative efforts of this magnitude need to maintain a longitudinal focus. The outcome results of CBIC will take considerable time to occur. Participants, especially those top-level administrators who control the purse strings, need to be patient and establish a process and an outcome evaluation plan.

Second, the issue of up-front planning seems accurate in terms of the need to allocate time in the community and reduce prior duties. This translates into money. Although collaboration tends to be expensive initially, it will be interesting to see if the

long-range benefits become cost efficient. No model of how to implement CBIC exists, so participants seemed to learn as the project progressed. As more research is collected, it should then be more possible to perform better planning, and to avoid the pitfalls that other projects have encountered. However, authors have cautioned that there is no blueprint for change and that each collaboration effort needs to be unique to the neighborhood it serves.

Third, it does seem appropriate to involve all the schools associated with a particular CBIC. At the very least, some type of constant communication system should be established between every school and the team or between the school team representative and every school. It is difficult for principals to support and use an effort about which they and their staff know little.

Fourth, principals seemed very confused about how they should link up with CBIC. It appears warranted to suggest that administrators and staff involved with projects like CBIC receive training on collaboration. In-servicing could include not only teaming, but also could include brainstorming to develop ways that the school could link up with CBIC in the most effective and efficient manner. The form of linkage might look very different depending on staff and principals' personalities and the individual school's need. However, it does appear that efforts like CBIC could provide an invaluable resource for schools to improve their relationship with the community.

Fifth, it appears that the choice of what type of interagency collaboration effort is chosen may partially depend on where the neighborhood views their hub of community life. If, as in this project, the neighborhood is one of many neighborhoods within a large city and is serviced by many schools, the neighborhood is more likely to

view their hub of community life in a place like a community center. However, in other communities that are smaller and serviced by fewer schools, the schools may already be considered the hub of community life. In such instances, school-based efforts may be preferred.

CBIC does appear to provide an opportunity to create a direct link with troubled neighborhoods that have been traditionally alienated from bureaucracies such as the school. If the schools could form a link with good community effort, schools could share the credit/good feelings and rise with the positive community efforts. In cities where children come to the same school from many different neighborhoods, schools could also seize this chance to create a sense of community by the formation of direct links with CBIC that would coordinate all the different schools' and agencies' efforts that are involved with a particular neighborhood. CBIC also has the potential to create another avenue for the principal to assume a leadership role outside of the school that could be a new type of outreach to neighborhoods. Rather than the principal performing these outreach efforts alone or only with their school staff, CBIC could provide support and easier entry into distrustful neighborhoods. Principals could build off of the rapport and trust that may emanate from team members housed in the neighborhood, and could work with families in a preventive, proactive fashion. CBIC could provide a format to assist in the accomplishment of the large task of school reform.

## References

Behrman, R. E. (Ed.). (1992). The future of children,2. The Center for the Future of Children, The David and Lucille Packard Foundation.

Bolman, L. G. & Deal, T. E. (1984). Modern approaches to understanding and managing organizations. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Crowson, R. L., & Boyd, W. L. (1993). Coordinated services for children: Designing arks for storms and seas unknown. American Journal of Education, 101, 140-179.

Denton, W.H. (1987). Educational leadership in the community. The High School Journal, 70(4), 180-184.

Heath, S. B., & McLaughlin, M. W. (1987). A child resource policy: Moving beyond dependence on school and family. Phi Delta Kappan, 68, 576-580.

Jehl, J., & Kirst, M. (1992). Getting ready to provide school-linked services: What schools must do. In Behrman, R. (Ed.). The future of children, 2, The Center for the Future of Children, The David and Lucille Packard Foundation.

Leiter, J. (1983). Perception of community dissatisfaction and school organizational structures. American Educational Research Journal, 20(1), 45-62.

Sarason, S.B. (1982). The culture of the school and the problem of change. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc.

Schorr, L. B. (1988). Within our reach: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage. New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday.

Smylie, M. A., Crowson, R.L., & Hare, V. C. (1992). The principal and school-level administration of coordinated children's services. Paper presented at the Convention of the University Council for Educational Administration, Minneapolis, MN.

Smylie, M. A., Crowson, R.L., & Hare, V.C. (1993). The principal and community-school connections in Chicago's radical reform. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Atlanta, GA.

Valverde, L. A. (1988). Principals creating better schools in minority communities. Education and Urban Society, 20(4), 319-326.

Zeldin, S. (1990). The implementation of home-school-community partnerships: Policy from the perspectives of principals and teachers. Equity and Choice, Spring, 56-63.